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An Analysis of Responses to the BSEP
Questionnaire for Commanders and Key NCOs
at Army Posts in Germany and Panama

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An Analysis of Responses to
the Survey Questionnaire for Commanders and Key NCOs
at Army Posts in Germany and Panama

Introduction

As part of its review of BSEP programs, AIR personnel visited Army posts in USAREUR (Germany) and FORSCOM (Panama), interviewed military personnel and Education Center personnel, observed BSEP II classes, and administered questionnaires. This report presents responses to questionnaires administered to 92 commanders and NCOs, 57 in Germany and 35 in Panama.

Summary of Main Points

- Overall, commanders and NCOs said that BSEP II training had a positive effect on soldier performance. After BSEP II training, there was an increase in: the number of soldiers rated as performing in the top third of all soldiers in the unit (Germany: from 27% to 36%; Panama: from 33% to 41%), in those rated as "good" soldiers (Germany: from 28% to 36%; Panama: from 37% to 40%), and in those rated as "highly motivated" or "very highly motivated" to perform job tasks (Germany: from 35% to 57%; Panama: from 24% to 33%). Responses indicated that soldiers who have taken BSEP II training need "somewhat less" or "very much less" supervision compared to soldiers in the unit who have not had BSEP II training (Germany: from 17% to 41%; Panama: from 15% to 33%).

- According to commanders and NCOs, soldiers most often take BSEP II training to improve their GT scores (Germany: 48%; Panama: 67%), and least often to improve their job performance (Germany: 5%; Panama: 6%).
- During informal interviews, respondents reported that soldiers are most often approved for BSEP II training because they are good soldiers who want to improve their test scores, not because of outstanding deficiencies which would make them a conspicuous group, or because of poor job performance.
- Commanders and NCOs reported the major benefits of BSEP II training derived by soldiers to be in the area of attitude development, i.e., motivation and self esteem. Of the benefits ranked, leadership and unit readiness received the lowest rankings.
- Although commanders and NCOs ranked unit readiness lowest of the benefits derived by soldiers from BSEP II training, they nevertheless agreed that BSEP II training "contributes directly to unit readiness by providing soldiers with the prerequisite skills needed to successfully carry out their part of the unit's training and operations activities" (Germany: 63% "agree" or "strongly agree"; Panama: 66% "agree" or "strongly agree").

Methods

AIR personnel administered Survey Questionnaires for Commanders and Key NCOs at 13 Army posts in Germany and four posts in Panama. (Table 1 shows the number of respondents who completed questionnaires, by Army post.) The commanders and NCOs had supervised soldiers who were either enrolled in BSEP II classes at the time of AIR's visits, or had taken BSEP II classes in the past. Besides administering the Survey Questionnaires to commanders and NCOs, AIR personnel interviewed them individually or in small groups. The visits to posts in Germany took place from August 1 through August 25, 1982; the Panama visits took place from December 6 through December 10, 1982.

Findings

For this report, the responses to the questions are separated into three categories:

- How does BSEP II training relate to soldiers' needs?
- What are the effects of BSEP II training on unit needs?
- What are the effects of BSEP II training on soldiers' performance of MOS job tasks?

Table 1
 Commanders and NCOs Completing Questionnaires
 in Germany and Panama
 by Army Post

<u>POSTS</u>	<u>RESPONDENTS</u>
* GERMANY *	
<u>BAUMHOLDER COMMUNITY</u>	
H.D. Smith Barracks	11
<u>HANAU COMMUNITY</u>	
Armstrong Barracks	2
Fliegerhorst Kaserne	2
Hutier Kaserne	6
Pioneer Kaserne	6
<u>KARLSRUHE COMMUNITY</u>	
Army Depot (Germersheim)	1
Gerzewski Barracks	4
Neureut Kaserne	4
Rheinland Kaserne	3
<u>NUREMBERG COMMUNITY</u>	
Ferris Barracks	5
Herzo Base	4
Montieth Barracks	6
Pinder Barracks	3
n=57	

* PANAMA *	
<u>Fort Clayton</u>	
Fort Davis	18
Fort Gulick	7
Fort Kobbe	1
n=35	

How Does BSEP II Training Relate to Soldiers' Needs?

1. Why do soldiers enroll in BSEP II classes? Commanders and NCOs were asked to identify which of the following reasons soldiers most frequently had for enrolling in BSEP II classes: low GT scores, failed SQTs, command referral, self selection, job performance, or other (the commanders and NCOs could fill in their own reason). Both in Panama and in Germany, commanders and NCOs agreed that the majority of soldiers enrolled in BSEP II because of low GT scores (Germany: 48% of 39 responses to the question; Panama: 67% of 28 responses). The second most frequently cited reason for taking BSEP II in Germany and Panama was "self selection" (Germany: 24%; Panama: 9%). Commanders and NCOs wrote in that soldiers often enrolled in BSEP II because they lacked a high school diploma (Germany: 8%; Panama: 7%). (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Commanders' and NCOs' Reporting of Reasons
Soldiers Enroll in BSEP II Programs

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Low GT Score	48%	67%
Failed SQT	1%	3%
Command Referral	11%	3%
Self Selection	24%	9%
Job Performance	5%	6%
Write In:		
Lack High School Diploma	8%	7%
Other	3%	4%
	n=39	n=28

2. Do soldiers have problems in the unit because of deficiencies in basic skills? Respondents were asked how often soldiers in their units had problems because of deficiencies in reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematics, measuring, or other skills (to be written in). They were asked to rank these skills from highest to lowest according to those which presented the greatest problem to those which presented the least problem to soldiers. At both commands, commanders and NCOs considered reading and writing to be the skills in which soldiers were most deficient, whereas measuring was the skill which caused the least problem. In Germany, reading was most frequently ranked first as the skill in which soldiers were deficient (37% of 54 respondents) and in Panama, writing was the skill ranked first (54% of 26 respondents). If the skills are ranked according to the mean ranking for each skill, they appear as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Ranking of Skills in Which Soldiers Have Problems
by Mean Ranking for Each Skill

<u>Germany</u>			<u>Panama</u>		
<u>Skill</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Skill</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>
Reading	2.2	54	Writing	2.0	26
Writing	2.5	55	Reading	2.6	26
Listening	3.3	54	Speaking	3.4	27
Mathematics	3.7	53	Mathematics	3.7	27
Speaking	3.9	54	Listening	4.0	27
Measuring	5.6	51	Measuring	4.9	26
Other	5.7	16	Other	6.9	7

3. Would training in specific skills help soldiers perform better in the unit? Commanders and NCOs were presented with a list of skills related to the learning process: memorizing, taking notes, outlining, concentrating while working, paying attention to details, learning how to complete assigned tasks, reducing anxiety about taking tests, and learning tips for taking tests. They were asked to rank the skills from highest to lowest according to those in which specific training would provide the greatest improvement to those in which specific training would provide the least improvement in the general performance of soldiers in the unit. In Germany, there was more agreement among respondents regarding the ranking of skills than there was in Panama, where ratings tended to be more dispersed. However, in both Germany and Panama, respondents agreed that training in "paying attention to details" and "learning how to complete tasks" would help soldiers perform better. They also agreed on the lowest ranking of skills: training in "tips for taking tests" was least important for performing better. Table 4 shows a ranking by respondents of skill areas in which specific training would help the general performance of soldiers in the unit, by mean ranking for each skill area.

Table 4
 Ranking of Skill Areas in Which Specific Training
 Would Improve the General Performance of Soldiers in the Unit
 by Mean Ranking for Each Skill Area

Germany			Panama		
<u>Skill Areas</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Skill Areas</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>
Paying Attention to Details	1.8	53	Paying Attention to Details	2.9	29
Learning How to Complete Tasks	2.6	52	Learning How to Complete Tasks	3.3	29
Concentrating While Working	3.3	52	Taking Notes	3.6	28
Taking Notes	4.0	49	Concentrating While Working	4.2	29
Memorizing	4.9	49	Memorizing	4.7	26
Outlining	5.6	50	Outlining	5.0	27
Reducing Test Anxiety	6.1	51	Reducing Test Anxiety	5.8	27
Tips for Taking Tests	6.6	51	Tips for Taking Tests	6.0	27

4. What are the benefits of BSEP II training? Commanders and NCOs were asked to rank the following as benefits derived by soldiers as a result of taking BSEP II training: job performance, improved discipline, self esteem, motivation, trainability, leadership, unit readiness, and other benefits (they might write in). In both Germany and Panama, commanders and NCOs agreed that self esteem and motivation were the greatest benefits derived by soldiers from BSEP II training, whereas unit readiness was the lowest ranked benefit of BSEP II training. At both commands, respondents

ranked self esteem first (Germany: 65% of 52 respondents; Panama: 52% of 27 respondents). They ranked motivation second (Germany: 34% out of 50; Panama: 36% out of 25). This high degree of agreement about the major benefits of BSEP II training conforms to the statements made by respondents during informal interviews at both commands. Respondents generally expected and perceived the benefits to be in the area of attitude, not in leadership and unit readiness, skills normally taught by military personnel. In addition, commanders and NCOs did not disparage these attitudinal effects. Rather, they expressed to us that an improved attitude affected positively a soldier's willingness to perform better and to learn, thus indirectly affecting job performance. Improved job performance was ranked third in Panama and fourth in Germany as a benefit derived by soldiers from BSEP II training. Table 5 shows a ranking of perceived benefits derived by soldiers from BSEP II training, by mean ranking for each benefit.

Table 5
 Ranking by Commanders and NCOs
 of Benefits Derived by Soldiers from BSEP II Training
 by Mean Ranking

<u>Germany</u>			<u>Panama</u>		
<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Mean Ranking</u>	<u>N</u>
Self Esteem	1.9	52	Self Esteem	2.3	27
Motivation	3.0	50	Motivation	3.0	27
Trainability	3.2	50	Job Performance	3.7	26
Job Performance	3.9	50	Trainability	3.9	26
Improved Discipline	4.7	50	Improved Discipline	4.4	25
Leadership	5.5	50	Leadership	5.0	26
Unit Readiness	5.7	48	Unit Readiness	5.7	26

5. Before and after taking BSEP II training, what percentage of soldiers fit into the following categories: model soldiers, good soldiers, average soldiers, adequate soldiers, or marginal soldiers? In both Germany and Panama, respondents said that after taking BSEP II training, there was an increase in the number of soldiers whom they considered to be "good" soldiers (Germany: from 28% before BSEP II to 36% after BSEP II; Panama: from 37% before BSEP II to 40% after BSEP II) (41 responded to the question in Germany and 19 responded in Panama). Although the improvement was slight, Table 6 shows movement in most categories generally indicating improvement by soldiers.

Table 6
 Ratings of Soldiers
 Before and After Taking BSEP II Training
 by Percentage Fitting into Each Category

	Germany		Panama	
	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Model Soldiers	13%	11%	10%	12%
Good Soldiers	28%	36%	37%	40%
Average Soldiers	34%	31%	34%	29%
Adequate	20%	17%	15%	13%
Marginal Soldiers	5%	4%	5%	5%
	n=41		n=19	

6. How many soldiers who took one cycle of BSEP II training took an additional cycle of BSEP II or other more advanced educational programs? Fifty-three percent of 55 respondents in Germany and 48% of 34 respondents

in Panama reported that at least one third of the soldiers took another cycle of BSEP II training or other advanced educational programs. Thirty-three percent of 55 respondents in Germany and 35% of 34 respondents in Panama stated that they did not have the information available to them to make a reliable estimate. Table 7 shows Commanders' and NCOs' reporting of additional educational training taken by soldiers who had already taken one cycle of BSEP II training.

Table 7
Commanders' and NCOs' Reporting of
Percent of BSEP II Soldiers Who Took an Additional Cycle
of BSEP II Training or Other More Advanced Educational Programs

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Most of Them	29%	21%
Between One-Third and Two-Thirds	24%	27%
Less Than One-Third	15%	18%
Don't Have Reliable Information Available	33%	35%
	n=55	n=34

What are the Effects of BSEP II Training on Unit Needs?

1. Does BSEP II training improve a soldier's ability to fit into the unit's overall training activities? Commanders and NCOs were asked how often a soldier's ability to fit into the unit's overall training activities was improved because the soldier took BSEP II training. Respondents in Germany and Panama appeared to see BSEP as having a positive effect on soldiers' ability to fit into the unit's training activities. In Germany,

where respondents did not have the option of responding "don't know" to the question, 63% noted improvement "frequently" or "almost always" ("frequently": 45%; "almost always": 18%). In Panama, 33% of 34 respondents reported that soldiers' ability to fit into unit training activities improved "frequently" or "almost always" as a result of taking BSEP II training ("frequently": 21%; "almost always": 12%). Table 8 shows respondents' ratings of the effect of BSEP II training on soldiers' ability to fit into unit training activities.

Table 8
Does Soldiers' Ability to Fit Into Unit Training Activities Improve as a Result of Taking BSEP II Training?

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Almost Always	18%	12%
Frequently	45%	21%
Sometimes	25%	29%
Rarely	10%	15%
Almost Never	2%	-----
Don't Know	-----	24%
	n=49	n=34

2. Does BSEP II training contribute to unit readiness? Commanders and NCOs were asked if they: "strongly agree," "agree," are "undecided," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" that "BSEP II training contributes directly to unit readiness by providing soldiers with the prerequisite skills needed to successfully carry out their part of the unit's training and operations activities?" At both commands, respondents agreed with this question: 64% in Germany said they "agree" or "strongly agree" (32% "agree"

and 32% "strongly agree" out of 54 responding), and in Panama, 66% said they "agree" or "strongly agree" (49% "agree" and 17% "strongly agree" out of 35 responding). Table 9 indicates responses of commanders and NCOs regarding the effect of BSEP II training on unit readiness.

Table 9
Does BSEP II Training Contribute to Unit Readiness
by Providing Soldiers with Prerequisite Skills?

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Strongly Agree	32%	17%
Agree	32%	49%
Undecided	15%	26%
Disagree	20%	6%
Strongly Disagree	2%	3%
	n=54	n=35

3. What effect does BSEP II training have on the unit training schedule? Respondents were asked to answer "yes," "no," or "don't know," whether BSEP II training has a "disrupting effect on unit training schedules and possibly on unit readiness because of the amount of time it requires some soldiers to be absent from their unit during duty hours?" Respondents in Germany felt that BSEP II did interfere with training schedules whereas Panama respondents disagreed. In Germany, 57% said "yes," and 43% said "no" (out of 54 responding). However, in Panama, 51% said "no," while 40% responded "yes" out of 35 responding (9% said they "don't know"). (See Table 10.)

Table 10
Does BSEP II Training Have a Disrupting Effect
on Unit Training Schedules?

<u>Germany</u>		<u>Panama</u>	
Yes	57%	Yes	40%
No	43%	No	51%
--	--	Don't Know	9%
n=54		n=35	

Respondents were asked if they "agree that BSEP II training is nevertheless worth it because of the improved soldier performance it generates?" Of those who said "yes" to the previous question, in Germany, 66% said they "agree" or "strongly agree," and in Panama, 86% said they "agree" or "strongly agree" (out of 30 responding in Germany and 14 in Panama). (See Table 11.)

Table 11
Is BSEP II Training Nevertheless Worth It
Because It Improves Soldier Performance?

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Strongly Agree	13%	43%
Agree	53%	43%
Undecided	20%	14%
Disagree	10%	0
Strongly Disagree	3%	0
	n=30	n=14

4. Is the course period satisfactory? Commanders and NCOs were asked, "How do you feel about the average length of time soldiers from your unit typically spend in BSEP II training?" Respondents in Germany and Panama answered similarly: nearly half said it was "just about right" (50% out of 54 responding in Germany, and 36% out of 33 responding in Panama). At both commands, some respondents felt the course was "somewhat too long" (19% in Germany and 27% in Panama), although the Germany course lasted three weeks and the Panama course lasted two weeks. (See Table 12.)

Table 12
Ratings by Commanders and NCOs
of BSEP Course Length

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Much Too Long	7%	0%
Somewhat Too Long	19%	27%
Just About Right	50%	36%
Somewhat Too Short	11%	15%
Much Too Short	13%	6%
Undecided	----	15%
	n=54	n=33

5. Before and after taking BSEP II training, how do soldiers who have taken BSEP II training compare with those who have not. Respondents were asked what percentage of soldiers typically perform in the top third, the middle third, or the bottom third of all soldiers in the unit, before and after BSEP II training. In both Germany and Panama, commanders' and NCOs' responses showed improvement in soldier performance after taking BSEP II

training. There was an increase in those performing in the top third of the unit after BSEP II (from 27% to 36% in Germany and from 33% to 41% in Panama), and a decrease in those performing in the bottom third of the unit after BSEP II (from 33% to 22% in Germany and from 24% to 21% in Panama with 39 responding in Germany and 18 responding in Panama.) Table 13 shows ratings of soldiers' performance before and after taking BSEP II training.

Table 13
 Percentage of Soldiers With BSEP II Training
 Who Perform in the Top, Middle, and Bottom Third of the Unit
 Before and After BSEP II Training

	Germany		Panama	
	Before	After	Before	After
Top Third of Unit	27%	36%	33%	41%
Middle Third of Unit	40%	43%	43%	38%
Bottom Third of Unit	33%	22%	24%	21%
	n=39		n=18	

What are the Effects of BSEP II Training on Soldiers' Performance of MOS Job Tasks?

1. Before and after taking BSEP II training, how motivated are soldiers to perform all job-related duties? Respondents in Germany and Panama noted improvement in soldiers' motivation to perform MOS job tasks. There were more soldiers in the "highly motivated" and "very highly motivated" groups following BSEP II training than prior to that training (Germany: from 35% to 57%; Panama: from 24% to 33%) and less soldiers in the "somewhat motivated" or "not very motivated" groups following BSEP II training (Germany: from 18% to 8%; Panama: from 27% to 15%). Table 14 shows

commanders' and NCOs' ratings of soldiers' motivation before and after taking BSEP II training.

Table 14
Motivation of Soldiers Before and After BSEP II Training
To Perform All Job-Related Duties

	Germany		Panama	
	Before	After	Before	After
Very Highly Motivated	2%	8%	3%	3%
Highly Motivated	33%	49%	21%	30%
Motivated	47%	35%	36%	36%
Somewhat Motivated	10%	6%	24%	12%
Not Very Motivated	8%	2%	3%	3%
Don't Know	--	--	12%	15%
	n=49		n=33	

2. Before and after taking BSEP II training, how much job supervision do soldiers need? Commanders and NCOs were asked, "Compared to other soldiers in your unit, how much job supervision do soldiers who have taken BSEP II need?" According to respondents, BSEP II training appeared to reduce the need for supervision. Although about half of the respondents in Germany and Panama reported that soldiers need "about the same" supervision before and after taking BSEP II training (Germany: 49% before and 47% after, out of 51 responding; Panama: 62% before and 56% after, out of 34 responding), there was movement in most of the categories indicating the need for less supervision by soldiers after BSEP II training. There was an increase in those needing "somewhat less" or "very much less" supervision after taking BSEP II training (Germany: from 18% to 41%; Panama: from 15% to 33%) and

there was a decrease in those needing "somewhat more" or "very much more" supervision following BSEP II training compared with other soldiers not taking the training (Germany: from 34% to 12%; Panama: from 18% to 6%). Table 15 shows commanders' and NCOs' ratings of soldiers' need for job supervision before and after taking BSEP II.

Table 15
Soldiers' Need for Job Supervision Before and After
Taking BSEP II Training Compared with Soldiers
Not Taking BSEP II Training

	Germany		Panama	
	Before	After	Before	After
Very Much More	6%	2%	3%	3%
Somewhat More	28%	10%	15%	3%
About the Same	49%	47%	62%	56%
Somewhat Less	16%	39%	15%	21%
Very Much Less	2%	2%	0%	12%
Don't Know	--	--	6%	6%
	n=51		n=34	

3. After taking BSEP II, are soldiers able to perform job tasks that they were not able to do previously? Respondents in Germany and Panama seemed to indicate that BSEP II improved a soldiers' ability to perform new MOS related tasks. In Germany, where respondents were not given the option of answering "don't know" to the question, 47% out of 45 respondents reported that after taking BSEP II, soldiers were "frequently" or "almost always" able to perform new job tasks ("frequently": 31%; "almost always": 16%). In Panama, 27% out of 33 respondents reported that BSEP II training

improved soldiers' ability to perform new job tasks "frequently" or "almost always" ("frequently": 21%; "almost always": 6%). Table 16 reports commanders' and NCOs' ratings of soldiers' ability to perform new tasks after taking BSEP II training.

Table 16
After Taking BSEP II,
How Often Are Soldiers Able to Do MOS-Related Job Tasks
That They Were Not Able to Do Before?

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Almost Always	16%	6%
Frequently	31%	21%
Sometimes	40%	27%
Rarely	11%	9%
Almost Never	2%	----
Don't Know	----	36%
	n=45	n=33

4. Is time required to learn new tasks reduced after taking BSEP II training? In Germany, where respondents did not have the option of answering "don't know" to the question, 41% out of 47 respondents stated that BSEP II training "frequently" or "almost always" reduces the time required to learn new material ("frequently": 30%; "almost always": 11%). In Panama, 24% out of respondents said that training time was reduced "frequently" or "almost always" as a result of BSEP II training ("frequently": 21%; "almost always": 3%). Table 17 shows commanders' and NCOs' ratings of the effect of BSEP II training on the amount of time soldiers need to learn new tasks.

Table 17
Does BSEP II Training Reduce the Time Required to
Learn New Tasks?

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Panama</u>
Almost Always	11%	3%
Frequently	30%	21%
Sometimes	30%	35%
Rarely	28%	6%
Almost Never	2%	----
Don't Know	----	35%
	n=47	n=34

This report has presented responses to the Survey Questionnaire for Commanders and Key NCOs administered at Army posts in Germany and Panama. Respondents were asked about the effects of BSEP II training on soldiers' needs, unit needs, and on soldiers' performance of MOS job tasks. Commanders and NCOs reported the major benefits of BSEP II training derived by soldiers to be motivation and self esteem. However, they also agreed that BSEP II training contributes to unit readiness. According to the responses made by commanders and NCOs, there was an increase in the number of soldiers who performed in the top third of all soldiers in the unit, in those rated as "good" soldiers, and in soldiers' motivation to perform MOS job tasks. The responses indicated that there was a decrease in soldiers' need for supervision.